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Joint Inspection Unit

Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action" (JIU/REP/2011/11).

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Summary

The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action" presents a comprehensive review of the work of the United Nations in mine action, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/84. The objective of the review is to provide Member States with an independent perspective on this work. It is expected that the review will also serve to inform the development of the new United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for the period 2011-2015.

The present note reflects the views of organizations of the United Nations system on the recommendations provided in the report. The views of the system have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by organizations members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which welcomed the report and supported some of its conclusions.

I. Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action" (JIU/REP/2011/11) presents a comprehensive analysis of the work of the United Nations in mine action, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/84. The objective of the review is to provide Member States with an independent perspective on this work. It is expected that the review will also serve to inform the development of the new United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for the period 2011-2015.

II. General comments

2. Organizations of the United Nations system welcome the report. They generally support its recommendations and underlying analysis, and note its role in improving the work of the United Nations in mine action.

3. In responding to the analysis and recommendations contained in the report, organizations of the United Nations system coordinated their views through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, facilitated by the United Nations Mine Action Service and comprising 14 organizations of the United Nations system. In this context, organizations viewed the report as a tool to be used for continuous improvement as well as a means to ensure sustainable and cost-effective results for Member States.

4. Organizations are of the view that the indicators of success in mine action include improved livelihoods, accelerated socioeconomic development and contributions made to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. However, some organizations believe that the report could have been strengthened by emphasizing the overall successes of the mine action sector in decreasing the number of accidents related to mines and unexploded ordnance around the world; in reducing the fear that mines create in post-conflict populations and the constraints that they impose on them; and in all but halting mine use through the combined advocacy efforts of the United Nations, civil society and other partners. The report's narrative reflects an inconsistent approach, given that these successes are not specifically highlighted, whereas other impressive statistics are presented. Agencies also note that Member States and stakeholders generally agree that in comparison with other sectors, mine action is regarded as having been very effective, as a result of constant efficiency improvements within the mine action community as a whole and the overall guidance framework provided by organizations of the United Nations system.

5. In addition, organizations note the need for clarification with regard to some aspects of the report. For example, paragraph 94 notes the importance of separation between coordination and implementation functions in mine-related activities, citing the potential for conflicts of interest. However, some organizations emphasize that this is not always an issue, noting that the responsibility for the management and administration of the extrabudgetary resources in all the trust funds of the Secretariat, as well as of assessed resources, involves both the coordination and the implementation of projects and activities as part of the fulfilment of mandated workplans. Other agencies agree with the findings of the Joint Inspection Unit with

respect to mine action, noting that the report conveys important messages to help ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in carrying out both functions as part of the delivery of mandates and that modalities can enhance effectiveness and efficiency and strengthen ownership and accountability, ensuring that responsibility is not diluted.

6. Furthermore, agencies note that the Joint Inspection Unit could have improved the report by assessing the effectiveness of the various mechanisms that support mine action activities, as referred to in paragraph 143. While the report mentions the independent funding mechanisms for the mine action activities of other United Nations entities, such as the Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme and the local country offices of the United Nations Children's Fund, it contains no evaluation or analysis of their scope, governance and effectiveness as inter-agency mechanisms, as is done with respect to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action of the United Nations Mine Action Service. Nor does it contain any assessment of how they are functioning and integrating, if at all, as part of "Delivering as one" in terms of United Nations system-wide mine action activities. It appears that the funding mechanisms of other United Nations entities operate as stand-alone modalities and support only their own independent initiatives, as mandated by their respective executive boards, given that they are not inter-agency trust funds. In the absence of substantive analysis of the funding mechanisms for the mine action activities of other United Nations entities, it is unclear whether the alleged issues relating to the Voluntary Trust Fund are unique to that fund.

7. With respect to the issues relating to the disbursement time frames of the Voluntary Trust Fund as described in paragraphs 151 to 154 of the report, agencies point out that in most cases, delays are a result of lengthy negotiations regarding refunds and overhead costs, as well as of the terms and conditions of agreements with organizations of the United Nations system, many of which have their own regulatory frameworks. Standardized agreements, templates and fees, such as those that exist for all other United Nations multi-partner trust funds, will ameliorate this situation and therefore were recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit and supported by some agencies. However, as a custodian of voluntary contributions, the United Nations is committed to the effective and efficient utilization of contributions, which ensures the best value for money in the interest of mandate implementation.

8. In relation to parts of the report reflecting the financial management of the Voluntary Trust Fund, the United Nations notes its long-established policy that assessed budgets cannot subsidize any extrabudgetary activity. Therefore, in order to ensure that assessed budgets do not subsidize extrabudgetary activities, the coordination activities of the United Nations Mine Action Service are justifiably met from un-earmarked resources, which are already limited and constitute only 3 per cent of total voluntary contributions.

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Secretary-General, as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), in consultation with the executive heads of

relevant United Nations system organizations involved in mine action, should appoint a focal point for victim assistance within the United Nations system. This entity should place particular emphasis on integrating victim assistance into national health systems when feasible, while considering the broader work, capacity-building and the international normative framework related to the rights of persons with disabilities and the role of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

9. Organizations of the United Nations system welcome this recommendation and note their interest in participating in efforts to ensure more effective United Nations support for victims.

Recommendation 2

In the context of the preparation of the new strategy, the Secretary-General should establish a global baseline of reliable data while building on ongoing efforts, which should facilitate the systematic monitoring of progress and the final evaluation of actual results achieved towards the strategic objectives.

10. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. They note that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action has developed a monitoring and evaluation framework to strengthen the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for the period 2011-2015, endorsed by the principals of the Coordination Group in December 2012.

Recommendation 3

The Secretary-General, as Chair of CEB and in consultation with the executive heads of relevant United Nations system organizations involved in mine action, should initiate a transparent and inclusive process aimed at clarifying the terms of reference of the United Nations Mine Action Service as well as the tasks and mandates of other actors, with a view to positioning the Service as the main mine action policy and coordinating entity in addition to its role as a focal point for United Nations mine action, while recognizing its operational role in specific contexts, such as emergency responses, peacekeeping and support to special political missions.

11. Organizations of the United Nations support and welcome this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

The United Nations Mine Action Service, in its role as the focal point for mine action, should develop relevant training materials to strengthen the staff capacity, in particular for the common induction of new staff joining any of the United Nations funds, programmes and/or specialized agencies involved in activities related to mine action, paying particular attentio to the important role played by non-United Nations entities.

12. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. They note their keen interest in participating in finding a constructive, effective and cost-efficient way forward and are dedicated to the full implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

The United Nations Mine Action Service, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, should develop an evaluation strategy establishing the framework for all types of evaluations, internal or external, including criteria for the systematic evaluation of the Strategy as well as of field activities when relevant.

13. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. They note the importance of the monitoring and evaluation framework developed for the new Strategy in implementation of the recommendation.

Recommendation 6

The Secretary-General should revise the terms of reference of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, taking into account recent United Nations trust fund reform efforts, relevant institutional changes and lessons learned from the experience with multi-donor trust funds, with a view to ensuring more inclusive, transparent and independent governance of the Fund as well as to making its management more efficient and effective.

14. Organizations of the United Nations system take note of this recommendation. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit was intended to cover mine action operations relating to the organizations of the United Nations system, yet it does not include a review or analysis of the independent funding mechanisms for mine-action-related activities that were established and are managed by entities of the United Nations system other than those of the Secretariat. Therefore, and in order to ensure a consistent and coherent approach, organizations stress that it would not be appropriate to review the terms of reference of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action in isolation, as recommended in the report.

15. Since the Voluntary Trust Fund is a Secretariat trust fund, any revision to the terms of reference should be in accordance with the regulatory framework and policies of the Secretariat, in particular the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. It should be noted that the terms of reference constitute a generic document that applies generally to all Secretariat trust funds and is derived from the regulatory framework and the underlying mandates of the specific programmes established by the General Assembly in its resolutions. A similar review should be undertaken with respect to the terms of reference of the parallel funding mechanisms for other entities of the United Nations system.

Recommendation 7

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present report at its sixty-eighth session.

16. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation.